



OFFICE OF MISSOURI GOVERNOR

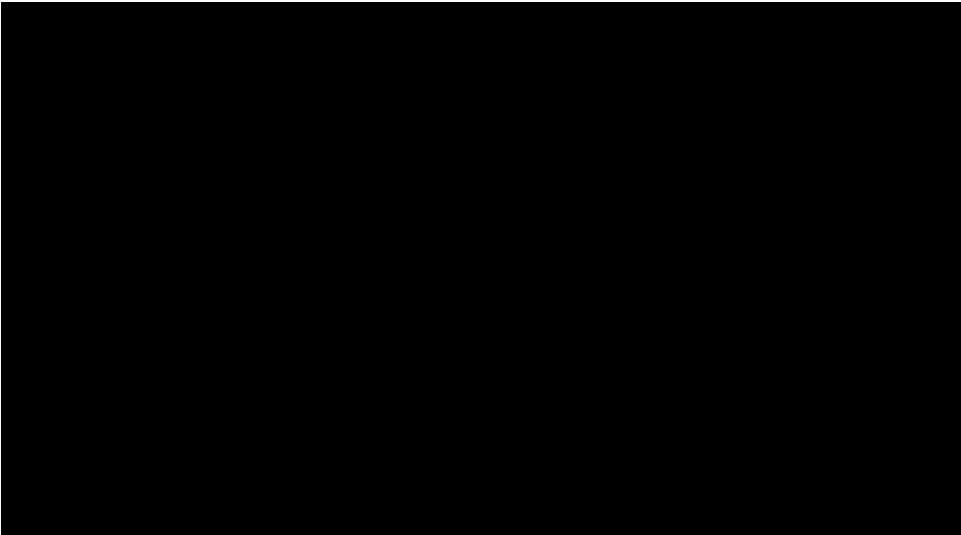
JAY NIXON

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Governor Jay Nixon's Speeches

Jefferson City, January 14, 2013

Gov. Nixon – Second inaugural speech



Thank you, Judge Burlison. Thank you, President Pro Tem Dempsey and Speaker Jones.

Let me begin by thanking the people of Missouri for the privilege of serving a second term as your Governor. I am grateful and humbled that once again, you have given me the opportunity to lead our state forward.

I will honor the trust and confidence you have placed in me each and every day.

I'm joined today by Missouri's First Lady – my lovely wife, Georganne – our sons, Jeremiah and Will, and the rest of our family.

I'd like to welcome Missouri's former governors, our statewide office holders, members of the Missouri Supreme Court, legislators and the people of Missouri.

When I first came to the Capitol as a freshman senator from my hometown of De Soto, I was just 30 years old – the youngest person in the Senate.

I had the good fortune to serve with many thoughtful, dedicated and capable legislators on both sides of the aisle.

Then, as now, Republicans and Democrats were deeply committed to their beliefs.

Then, as now, we had a divided state government, with a governor of one party, and the other party holding a majority in the legislature.

Disagreement and debate were daily fare.

But it was possible to disagree, while continuing to advance the public good. Cooperation wasn't considered a sign of weakness, but rather a prerequisite for progress.

And progress is not partisan.

We understood that, first and foremost, we were all Missourians.

So no matter which way the pendulum of power might swing, or which way the political winds blew, our bedrock Missouri values of hard work, optimism, faith and compassion never wavered.



Those steadfast values have served the people of our state well for generations, and will serve us well for generations to come.

Now, some pundits like to say that politics in the Show-Me State has never been more partisan, more difficult than it is today.

But as history tells us, that's simply not true.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Missouri was bitterly divided in the struggle for our nation's survival – and its soul.

For a time, Missouri had two state governments, two state capitals and two governors.

Two state flags fluttered above the boys in blue and gray, the sons of farmers and cobblers, tinkers and slaves. They fought and died on blood-soaked ground from the Bootheel to the Iowa border.

They rose with valor and fell with honor at Liberty and Lexington, Carthage and Wilson's Creek, Boonville and Fredericktown.

Our newest state park commemorates the Battle of Island Mound, where the first African-American troops shed their blood for the Union in 1862.

Centralia was the site of an infamous massacre, when confederate guerrillas bushwhacked more than 100 Union soldiers and hacked them to ribbons. Taking part in the killing spree were two young brothers from Clay County: 20-year-old Frank and 16-year-old Jesse James.

Twelve of Missouri's governors served in the military during the Civil War.

That's right: twelve.

And for years after the war's official end, the suffering, retaliation and political struggles dragged on – crippling our economy, testing our resolve.

That my friends? That was hard politics.

But from that time forward the arc of Missouri history shows us that even the deepest divisions can be healed.

The people of Missouri are tough and resilient.

And generation after generation, a bold vision for the future and a passion for progress spur us forward.

We pushed back the wilderness, tilled the prairie and opened the western frontier.

We built railroads and highways, founded great universities and hospitals, tamed mighty rivers and even conquered space.

In good times and bad, through hellish drought and high water, the people of Missouri have proved their mettle. And, as we've seen these past few years, when our backs are against the wall, we come together:

When the American auto industry was on the ropes in 2009, we pulled together and got it back on its feet. More vehicles made in Missouri means thousands of jobs for hardworking folks in every corner of our state.

In a competitive and volatile global marketplace, we stepped up our game to set all-time records for exports in agriculture, biotech and defense – deals worth billions, creating prosperity at home.

When Mother Nature hit our neighbors with ice storms, floods, drought and the most devastating tornado in our history, we rallied to their side. We were there at every step – from rescue to rebuilding. And the strength and resilience of Missourians inspired the world.

History has left its indelible mark on our landscape, and our character.

But history is not destiny.

We do not inherit the future. We must build the future.

A future without limits:

Where all our children get an education that prepares them to compete for the best jobs in the global economy;

Where the brightest minds in science and technology advance the frontiers of human knowledge;

Where business and the arts flourish;

Where the bounty of Missouri's farms and fields will feed, clothe and power the planet;
And where the natural beauty of our state is preserved and cherished for all time.

I am more optimistic than ever about our future.

We will put our shared principles ahead of our small differences, and work together for the common good.

The people of Missouri deserve – and expect – no less.

And that is how I intend to lead.

Throughout my quarter century of public service, I've had the opportunity to visit with thousands of

Missourians from all walks of life, in every corner of this great state.

Year after year, I've met them in the halls of this historic Capitol, exercising their First Amendment rights: midwives and math teachers; farmers and firefighters; Muslims and Mennonites; soldiers and Scouts. They may not – and in fact do not – always agree.

But they are a vivid reminder that democracy is a chorus of many voices.

And our democracy and our state are stronger for it.

On days like this one, I can look out the windows of my office and see the flags of our state and our nation, their colors bright against the winter sky, the wide Missouri River in the distance.

It's a beautiful sight.

It is a reminder of the bold pioneers who walked this land before us, who explored the wilderness, who dedicated their lives to the creation of a more perfect union, who fought and died so that we might one day enjoy peace and prosperity.

I think, too, of the bold pioneers who someday will explore new frontiers beyond our imagining.

Today, I took a solemn oath to serve all the people of Missouri, to do everything in my power to make your lives better, and to make life better for our children and grandchildren.

I pledge my oath to the waitress pulling double shifts just to feed and clothe her kids, praying that nobody gets hurt or sick – because she can't afford a doctor's bill.

I pledge my oath to the battle-weary veteran, home from Afghanistan, who deserves a job worthy of his skills and sacrifice.

I pledge my oath to the farmer who plows and plants through flood and drought, year in and year out.

Hard working, God-fearing, decent folk.

I carry them in my heart.

Their strength gives me strength.

Their courage gives me courage.

And to live a life of service to the people of Missouri is my greatest honor.

Our time here is fleeting.

But the work we do will endure.

Together we can – and we will – build a bright future for the great state of Missouri in the greatest nation on earth.

May God almighty guide us in our work.

Thank you and God bless.

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